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Letter dated 17 April 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a memorandum from the Government of Burundi setting out Burundi's concerns on the eve of the Security Council mission to the Great Lakes region.

The Government of Burundi welcomes the Council's delegation and wishes it every success in its noble enterprise of helping Burundians to regain peace and security, so that they may focus on the task of reconstruction and development.

I should be grateful if you could have this letter and the attached memorandum circulated as documents of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Marc **Nteturuye**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 17 April 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Security Council mission to Burundi

Memorandum submitted by the Government of Burundi

By this second visit in the space of 12 months, the Security Council is demonstrating the importance that it attaches to Burundi and the Great Lakes region. The Government of Burundi welcomes this attitude.

In May 2001, the Government of Burundi made a presentation to the distinguished members of the Security Council describing the political situation as being largely dominated by the peace process, particularly since 1998, which marked the beginning of the Arusha negotiations that culminated in the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement of 28 August 2000.

Our peace process has moved forward since the Security Council's last visit, with the implementation of the Peace Agreement that arose out of the Arusha negotiations. Burundi's Transitional Government, consisting of representatives of the political forces that participated in those negotiations, was installed on 1 November 2001. Shortly thereafter, the National Assembly and transitional Senate were set up, also on the basis of what was agreed at Arusha.

All the institutions that have been put in place are functioning smoothly and to the satisfaction of all.

The numerous statements and positions adopted by the Security Council with a view to encouraging Burundians to take action to solve the problems that originally caused the crisis have been well taken to heart by the people and the political class of Burundi.

However, we should like to share two major concerns with the international community, and with the Security Council in particular:

1. The ceasefire

When we began negotiations in Arusha in 1998, our preferred option was to include the armed groups in negotiations. This would have allowed us to negotiate immediately for an end to the violence and to seek a political solution to the problems that existed, while protecting the lives of innocent people who, even today, continue to be subjected to arbitrary acts of violence for which there can be no justification. The facilitation process at the time took a different tack.

The political concerns of the entire national community are reflected in the Arusha Agreement, which is now being implemented by political leaders who represent all tendencies, including the armed groups which continue to perpetrate acts of violence.

Facilitation efforts aimed at negotiating a ceasefire between the Government and the armed groups are being thwarted by the latter's intransigence. In such a situation, one must rise to the challenge; the remarkable work being done by the

Tanzanian authorities and the Tanzanian Government in this domain deserve the Security's Council's encouragement.

The Government of Burundi:

- Congratulates the Security Council on all the initiatives that it has taken to bring the armed groups to the negotiating table;
- Urges the Security Council to exert every effort to induce the armed groups to negotiate a ceasefire without delay;

  (With that in mind, the Council could, during its visit, bring strong direct pressure to bear on the leaders of the rebellion, whose identity is now well known, and encourage the countries of our subregion which have direct influence over these armed groups to persuade the groups in question to engage in a process of negotiation that will only end with the signing of a ceasefire.)

- Calls, if the proposed action founders, for concerted efforts to find an alternative solution among all peace-loving Burundians, the region and the international community in order to prevent the armed groups from holding the entire Burundian people to ransom. Coercive measures may be taken against such groups pursuant to article 2 (3) of the Arusha Agreement, if they refuse to negotiate the cessation of the violence. These measures could include steps to "demobilize, disarm, and, if necessary, arrest and detain" them;
- Requests the Security Council to approach the countries of the subregion that are mentioned in certain reports addressed to the Council as supplying weapons to the Burundian rebels, in order to persuade those countries to desist from providing weapons and logistical support to the Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD) and Forces Nationales de Libération (FNL).

If the trend that we observe continues, the violence in the country will utterly discredit the political class in the eyes of the population and make it impossible, in the current climate, to proceed with the implementation of the Arusha Agreement. This will have incalculable consequences for our country and the region. We must all refuse to accept such an outcome.

Our Government reiterates its willingness to negotiate tirelessly until a ceasefire is agreed, and it also undertakes to help create the best possible conditions for negotiations, so that there can be no excuse for any delaying tactics on the part of the armed groups.

2. Reconstruction and reintegration of disaster victims

The political crisis that has beset Burundi since 1993 has damaged the national economy. Humanitarian aid has been useful, but it has no impact on development.

Our Government, being aware of this fact, has sought the support of its traditional partners in Paris and, more recently, in Geneva for the resumption of structural cooperation.

The donor community has responded to our appeal by pledging a sum of US$ 830 million.

However generous this gesture may be, it is no substitute for a country's own development initiatives, including access to the international financial market; such access is denied to us because of Burundi's multilateral debt position, however.

The Multi-Donor Trust Fund is the only mechanism that has been identified so far to relieve our country's debt burden.

Here too, the Government of Burundi thanks the Security Council for supporting the provision of economic assistance to Burundi by the international community. Those external and internal partners that so recently put pressure on the Government of Burundi to sign the Peace Agreement before a ceasefire was achieved should now apply the same pressure to the armed groups to end their hostilities and allow the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction to begin. Not to support the Burundi peace process by providing appropriate assistance during the present phase of the implementation of the Peace Agreement amounts to inviting the rebels to flout the international community, hold the peace process hostage and continue the war indefinitely.

We appeal to the Security Council in particular to intercede on our behalf with the Bretton Woods institutions so that they conclude an agreement that will allow Burundi to embark on the post-conflict programme and to benefit from the facilities accorded to the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC).

Not only is the improvement of people's lives a right, but it is also a powerful factor for peace.

Once peace has been restored and the economic crisis has been eased, Burundians will commit themselves to development efforts and play a more active role in the search for and the maintenance of peace throughout the Great Lakes region.